DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 213 EA 017 769

AUTHOR Nottingham, Marv
TITLE Public and Professional Expectations for an Effective Educational Leader.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (Atlanta, GA, February 22-25, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administration; *Administrator Characteristics; Boards of Education; Curriculum; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; *Leadership; Learning Theories; Organizational Effectiveness; Principals; *School Effectiveness; *Skills; *Superintendents

ABSTRACT

The professional expectations for a superintendent are outlined and organized under three sets of skills. Technical skills the first set described, include (1) having language skills, (2) understanding teaching and being a teacher, (3) being current on learning theory, (4) being familiar with a variety of curricula, and (5) acting as a liaison between the board and the staff. The second set--conceptual skills--include (1) being a visionary, (2) clarifying goals, (3) understanding organizational systems, (4) having good judgment, and (5) understanding community power structures. Human skills, the third set, are important qualities for an effective superintendent and include (1) negotiation abilities, (2) catalytic leadership, (3) empathy, (4) high expectations, (5) loyalty, (6) maturity, and (7) a sense of humor. (MD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED257213

Presentation by Marv Nottingham, Ed.D. AASA 1985

Public and Professional Expectations for an Effective Educational Leader

I. Introductions

II. In this presentation, the primary emphasis will be upon what professionals should expect from an effective educational leader. Where appropriate, translations to what the public should expect are also emphasized. The difference between public and professional expectations is considered a difference in degree rather than kind.

III. These remarks frame the role of the superinterdent of schools but could also be interpreted as the role of principals. Emphasis will be on the superintendent's role.

IV. The professional expectations for the superintendent are organized under three sets of skills. They are (1) technical skills, (2) conceptual skills and (3) human skills. The Venn diagram on the following page illustrates the gestalt of an educational leader this presentation will portray.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

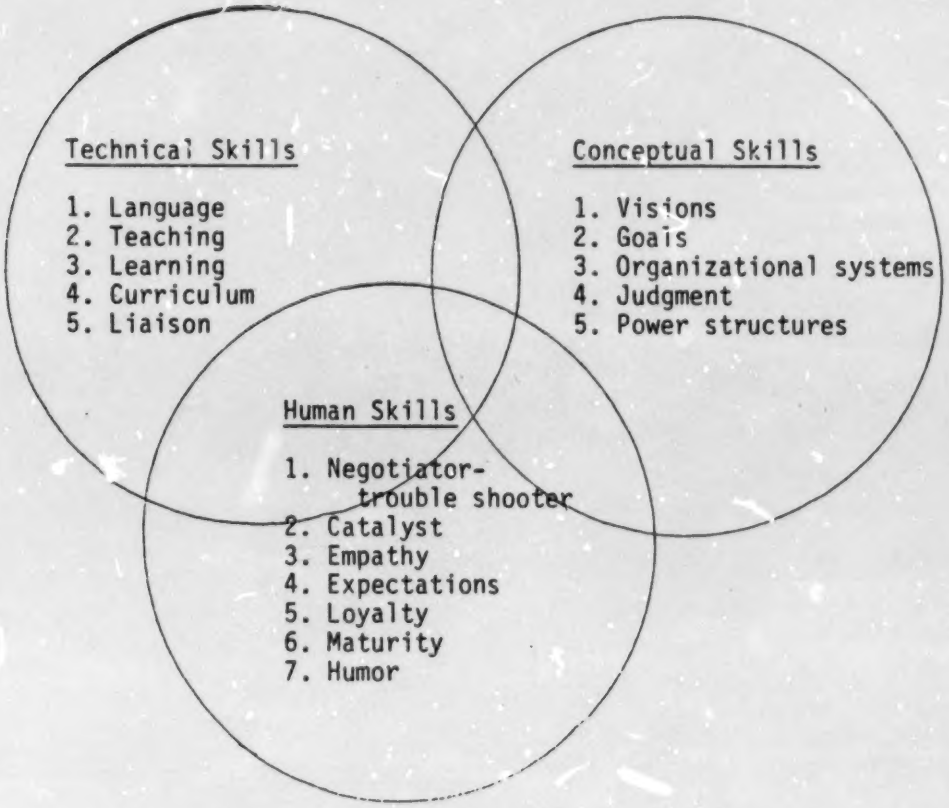
"PERMISSION TO REPR... ...S MATERIAL HAS BEEN G... ...EY

Marv Nottingham

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 017 769

AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADER



V. Technical Skills

1. Language facility is a critical leadership skill. We expect a superintendent to be verbally fluent, use correct expression and insist that district productions and releases are linguistically accurate. We expect a superintendent to "see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophisticated, and to discard what is not" (John Henry Cardinal Newman).

2. A superintendent understands a system of teaching and is a teacher. S/he is directly responsible for the growth of principals. Principals improve as a result of working with this leader. In the same vein, teachers improve as a result of working with a principal.

3. Educational leaders are up-to-date on learning theory. They recognize behaviors of teachers that are most likely to produce increased student learning. They monitor learning outcomes.

4. An educational leader is expected to be familiar with a variety of curricula. Accountability in education is difficult if decisions about what students are expected to learn have not been made.

5. An effective educational leader acts as a liaison between the board of education and the professional staff. S/he also acts as a link between the professional staff and the community. The communications requirements for this role are obvious. What may not be so obvious is the obligation the superintendent has to protect the board and the professional staff. Unwarranted attacks in board hearings or by misinformed citizens must be intercepted and neutralized by the superintendent whenever possible.

VI. Conceptual Skills

1. A major role of an effective educational leader is to be a visionary. S/he "signals to others what is of importance and value" (Sergiovanni). S/he is a "portrait painter of possibilities" (Bates and Kiersey). S/he has a vision of how the school district could be and rallies support by clarifying the vision.

2. Closely related to the visionary role is the clarification of goals. Goals are long-range statements of intent. They give direction to the school enterprise. They include such acknowledged purposes of schooling as (a) thinking, (b) preparation for the world of work, (c) transmission of the culture, (d) self-liberation, (e) civic responsibility, and (f) health.

3. An effective educational leader is a student of organizational systems. S/he recognizes the inherent loose-coupling phenomena in human service organizations. At the

same time s/he insists on tight coupling of the curriculum and of administrative structures necessary for waste reduction and efficiency. Conceptual views of complex organizations allow tolerance for amorphous boundaries, ambiguity, contingencies and imprecision.

4. Effective educational leaders cultivate judgment. Judgment is the ability to anticipate the consequences of a decision; the ability to predict results in a system that is in motion. Judgment is a conceptual skill acquired from experience, framed by intelligence and strengthened by knowledge or a data base. It is crucial to success in the political areas of the educational enterprise.

5. Related to judgment and the politics of education is a conceptual framework of the community power structures. An effective educational leader lobbies, button-holes, pleads a case, and influences power structures to acquire resources for and promote the educational goals of the district.

VII. Human Skills

Human skills are the glue that hold the educational enterprise together. The imprecision of input effects and outcome measures makes human skills in human service organizations crucial to their effectiveness.

1. Most organizations encounter crises on occasion. A crisis is a conflict out of control. Conflicts are inevitable. An effective educational leader mediates conflict and reduces crisis potential. In the face of crises s/he is a skilled negotiator, a cool head, a tension deflator.

2. An effective educational leader is a catalyst. People are inspired, work harder, produce more, feel ownership in the enterprise, feel efficacious, develop an "ethos" (Rutter) in an organization where catalytic leadership is strong. A catalyst brings out the best in people.

3. An effective educational leader is empathetic. S/he listens well, asks pertinent questions, sees the subtleties, feels the ambiguity, senses the issues and is compassionate with the problems of others.

4. Holding high expectations is a classic leadership characteristic. It is reinforced by the research on effective schools and by such exemplary inservice programs for teachers as TESA. The self-fulfilling prophecy is a concept with powerful potential.

5. Loyalty is an act of faith an effective educational leader should both display and expect. A superintendent has a right to expect loyalty from his/her subordinates in the administrative structure of the district. Loyalty is required for organizational health in human service organizations. Communications, decision-making and overall effectiveness are products of loyalty. Loyalty is inappropriate only when the leader is immoral.

6. Maturity refers to the human skills required when adversarial relationships are ascendant. Maturity in collective bargaining assumes that people are reasonable. It promotes win-win negotiations. It promotes power-sharing and "representational rule enforcement" (Lutz and Evans). An effective educational leader gains power by sharing power.

7. A sense of humor is an indispensable tool of an effective educational leader. An illustration follows. We will end laughing.